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Probiotics, Health and Nutrition

Western Heads East

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Mwanza, Tanzania Mamas, & Yogurt – Major Accomplishments/ Barriers

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Mwanza Goals – Major accomplishments/barriers

1. Yoghurt Production and Distribution

Positives:

- From what I observed, the TWG Mamas were consistently following appropriate quality control techniques in terms of opening and closing procedures, sanitation, and safe food handling
- All the mamas and customers took off their shoes before entering and left them at the door
- The kitchen was always clean and the mamas frequently washed the floor or cleaned up any spills immediately
- Glasses were always collected after a customer consumed the yoghurt/milk and washed with soap and water
- The kitchen was always only used for milk and yoghurt production – later in the day they would sit outside and prepare mandaazzi's for the next day at Mtoni, but I don't believe this interfered at all with the operations in the kitchen

Areas for improvement

- The mamas were not using a thermometer or lactometer to check the temperature or quality of the milk
- In my opinion, since they have been doing this for so long, they may be using their own experience and judgment to estimate when the appropriate temperatures have been reached
- Sometimes the milk was not put in a cold water bath after heating to cool it down which makes the whole process take much longer
- When we first arrived the Mamas hadn't been to NIMR to pick up the probiotics in over 2 months

2. High Quality Smooth Yoghurt

Positives:

- Because the electricity goes on and off intermittently it is easy for the yoghurt to go bad. The mamas seem to be on top of this issue and check and dispose of any bad/sour yoghurt

Areas for improvement:

- I tried to inform the mamas that it is important for the yoghurt to be smooth – some days it is better than others, but this still needs work
- They need to be reminded that smooth yoghurt means it is better quality and that the probiotics are evenly distributed throughout
- This is hard for the mamas to consistently apply because they say that the customers prefer it lumpy
- Both the Mahina and Igombe yoghurt did not seem to be as lumpy, but I only tasted it once

3. Education

Positives:

- I dedicated one meeting to educating the women about the health benefits of the probiotic yoghurt. I tried to make it as simple as possible and they seemed to understand
- I created a probiotics information sheet in Swahili that includes the health benefits of the probiotics, who they are for, what they do, etc. This is posted on the wall in the kitchen and I

have frequently seen customers viewing this, which is ultimately creating more awareness of the probiotics in the community

- I taught five times at Mtoni Secondary School on the health benefits of milk and yoghurt. The school does not have any food and nutrition courses so the students do not have a lot of knowledge in this area. They had many questions and I think they benefitted greatly from this education
- **Other Women's Groups:** I also provided education on probiotics to Mahina and Igombe
- As a result of some Global Health Students sending Chris and I some questions related to HIV/AIDS and general understanding of probiotics we were able to learn about the different stigmas that some people believe still exist and how people view bacteria, etc.

Barriers:

- I wanted to explore the HIV/AIDS related stigma in more detail with the mamas, but they didn't seem open to discussing their status so I didn't push the subject

4. Weekly Meetings

- I held weekly meetings with the Mamas every Monday at 4:00pm. Attendance was sometimes an issue
- They have a constitution on their wall with a leader for each key area:
 - ◆ **Mama Joyce: Chair**
 - ◆ **Mama Leah (older): Assistant Chair**
 - ◆ **Mama Elizabeth: Bookkeeping/Accounting**
 - ◆ **Mama Sabina: Human Resources**
 - ◆ **Mama Asha/Cecilia: Secretary**
 - ◆ **Everyone: Quality Control**
- The Mamas always listened well to what he had to say and generally followed through with the tasks (i.e. following up with Starehe Childrens home, contacting Edita from NIMR, etc.)

Areas for Improvement:

- Attendance – All women need to be at the meetings unless they have a good reason
- The women did not speak up much or voice any concerns
- In one meeting we told them about a great opportunity selling at Isamilo International School where there is a very high demand for yoghurt among the teachers and ex-pat parents. They said they were interested and we arranged with them to go on that Thursday. However, when Thursday came, they said they did not have enough yoghurt prepared and didn't want to go. This was extremely upsetting for the teachers and parents at the school who had been counting on the Mamas coming. This is very poor business on their part and they need to be aware that this is how they could lose customers. However, at a future meeting they expressed interest in selling their again. I decided to leave this up to them as I don't want to feel responsible for letting anyone down again

5. Visits to other kitchens

Mahina

- I made a couple of visits to the Mahina Kitchen and the mamas seem to be operating effectively despite a very small kitchen space and limited resources
- From what was observed in their books, it looks like they are making a profit of 150,000/month
- **Operations:** they heat the milk outside, cooling and stirring the milk inside. They also have a table and chairs inside which seemed to be crowding the area quite a bit. We suggested that they move the table and chairs outside and do all the milk/yoghurt preparation inside
- The yoghurt tasted very good, and they are selling in the market regularly

- Probiotics: I provided them with an information sheet on the health benefits of probiotics which is now in their kitchen
- I took Mama Dina to NIMR to introduce her to the staff and probiotic pick-up procedures. It is now up to them to start going and getting the probiotics. Esther will need to follow up with this, as the mamas indicated that they would need money for transport to NIMR

Igombe:

- They also have a very small kitchen (5mx3m) space with only one small fridge that can only fit one container of yoghurt
- They have few supplies: 2 large pots for boiling water, 2 containers for yoghurt, strainer, and cups
- The mamas said they sell around 20L per day at 1500/L. They receive their milk supply from someone who brings it from Kayanze which is about 20km away
- They sell in the market regularly and make a profit of around 3,000Tsh on 10L
- They said they are interested in getting the probiotics in the yoghurt.
- On my next visit I provided them with some education on the health benefits of probiotics and left them with two information sheets to put in their kitchen
- Mama Joyce indicated that she would be willing to pick up the probiotics from NIMR on their behalf. Will have to follow up with her to see if this is still the case

Buswelu:

- This group is really struggling – they have no fridge and very few materials
- They were trained by mama Joyce, but none of the other mamas seem to know this, and it seems like Mama Joyce is trying to keep this a secret
- When visited the kitchen they had milk but it was old and sour

Kivulini Youth Group:

- They are operating very effectively and their yoghurt is probably the best tasting
- They sell yoghurt almost every day right below our apartment and always sell completely out
- We did spend a lot of time with this group so I am unsure about how much profit they are making etc.
- There is a new Kivulini Kitchen in the process of starting up and it is likely that their yoghurt will be sold here